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Race and Class: More than a Liberal Paradox

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This essay is a critique of the liberal theory of race and class. This is an essay on method. This is my effort to contribute to the development of a new method of addressing race and class, called ClassCrit, the school of thought expressed in this collection of essays. ClassCrit is a school of thought that treats race and class as two distinct and, at the same time, interdependent concepts. Race and class are two concepts that together are both a theoretical and a social dilemma. My argument in this essay is that because liberalism as a theoretical frame is ill fitted to discuss race and class, ClassCrit is taking on a truly vexing theoretical dilemma. It is not possible within liberal theory to address the interdependency and yet distinctiveness of the concept of race in relationship to class. This school of thought called ClassCrit is not only taking on a vexing theoretical dilemma, ClassCrit is also taking on the social dilemma of race and class. This dilemma of race and class in American thought can almost be seen as a national trait: An American Dilemma, patterned on the lines of segregation. The American society is divided according to racial and economic lines. ClassCrit is where the theoretical segregation between race on one side and class on the other side meets the social division of people into race and class.

The problem with liberal theory in addressing race and class is that it operates around dichotomies that constitute paradoxes. The original liberal paradox is the freedom of the individual in its relationship to the collective order. For

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individual freedom to be possible, the very same freedom has to be constrained. Martti Koskeniemi describes the liberal paradox: "The fundamental problem of the liberal vision is how to cope with what seem like mutually opposing demands for individual freedom and social order."¹

THE LIMITATIONS OF LIBERAL THEORY

My argument is that liberal theory is not well suited to addressing an interdependency that is more multidimensional than a dichotomy, such as race and class. Liberalism in this sense is not able to address more than one binary at each time, in addition the binary has to be presented and perceived as being in fundamental opposition to itself, the way we see black and white as oppositional, or rich and poor as forming fundamentally opposite poles. Finally, each binary is universal and every other binary is a fundamental threat to the universality of every other binary. Race and class in relationship to white wealth goes beyond the dichotomy of black/white and poor/rich. Instead of trying open the possibility of multiple sets of pairs where each pair or dichotomy threatens the foundation of every other set of dichotomies, I want to suggest a theoretical frame that would allow us to look at race and class as a combined concept and at the same time with each distinct from the other. Race and class are distinct because neither's operational mechanisms are exchangeable with the other's. Race and class are connected because they both relate to white wealth. Theoretical exchangeability, as in liberalism, is when the theory allows for the replacement of one variable with another variable and leaves the theoretical model intact. Race and class are often used in this way. Race and gender are even more often used in this way. The most recent example of race and gender being treated as exchangeable within the same theoretical liberal model can be found in an essay by Gloria Steinem that appeared in the *New York Times* on the eve of the 2008 New Hampshire presidential primary.² At the time of her writing it looked

1. MARTTI KOSKENIEMI, *FROM APOLOGY TO UTOPIA: THE STRUCTURE OF INTERNATIONAL LEGAL ARGUMENT* 52 (1989).

2. Gloria Steinem, *Op-Ed.*, *Women Are Never Front-Runners*, *N.Y. TIMES*, Jan. 8, 2008.

as if Barack Obama would win the New Hampshire primary with double digits over Hillary Clinton. Steinem concludes that gender is harder to overcome than race because Barack could win Iowa and Hillary lost Iowa. This of course was before Hillary won New Hampshire and Barack came in second.

Steinem operates the liberal theory to its fullest. First, she makes race and gender exchangeable as pairs of dichotomies. She equates the dichotomy of black/white with the dichotomy woman/man.³ She begins her essay by giving the fictional example of a female equivalent of Barack and concludes that this fictional character would be unelectable for the same reason that Hillary was seen as going to a second loss in New Hampshire, because she is a woman.⁴ Steinem takes the next step by establishing each pair of dichotomies as universal. To be able to make the gender dichotomy universal Steinem uses the "exceptionality" that Barack as a black person constitutes by being in his position, the democratic frontrunner. This is how vulnerable the liberal use of dichotomies is; even a few exceptions undo the dichotomy because it operates on universals. After Steinem undoes the race dichotomy, only the gender dichotomy remains as the universal. For Hillary to be a victim of the gender dichotomy Barack has to exist

3. According to Steinem what worries her is the way that Barack's race gives him advantages while Hillary's gender gives her disadvantages. This is how Steinem describes it:

But what worries me is that he is seen as unifying by his race while she is seen as divisive by her sex.

What worries me is that she is accused of "playing the gender card" when citing the old boys' club, while he is seen as unifying by citing civil rights confrontations.

Id.

4. This what she writes:

T[he] woman in question became a lawyer after some years as a community organizer, married a corporate lawyer and is the mother of two little girls, ages 9 and 6. Herself the daughter of a white American mother and a black African father—in this race-conscious country, she is considered black—she served as a state legislator for eight years, and became an inspirational voice for national unity. . . .

Be honest: Do you think this is the biography of someone who could be elected to the United States Senate?

Id.

outside of the race dichotomy. And Barack is theoretically made to exist outside of the race dichotomy because he won, by winning he became the exception to the dichotomy of white supremacy over black inferiority. Race, as a dichotomy, has been disproved, and therefore it cannot exist. When the race dichotomy no longer exists the universality of the gender dichotomy is saved and thus Steinem can conclude that Hillary as a woman was not an exception to the universal dichotomy of male supremacy over female inferiority. Furthermore, because, per Steinem, Hillary lost, Hillary was discriminated against. In conclusion, Hillary can only be discriminated against as a woman if Barack as a black person is not being discriminated against. This is the problem of using liberalism when trying to explain social problems that are larger than one dichotomy. This is the limitation in using liberal theory in trying to address race and gender as well as race and class.

THE WELFARE STATE AND THE PERSISTENCY OF HIERARCHY

Race & Class is so much more than a liberal paradox. My argument in this essay is that it is necessary to leave liberal thinking behind in order to be able to address race and class. This essay will suggest a welfare state approach instead of binary thinking. A welfare state approach operates around social structures instead of dichotomies. The social structure of the welfare state does not operate around dichotomies, it allows for unlimited combinations and factors in its analysis of the persistence of social hierarchies. The welfare state operates not according to contrasts but according to equality. The social equality of the welfare state addresses social hierarchies as combinations of unlimited variables. This means that race and class are not exclusive of each other; rather, both race and class are intricate parts of what constitutes the persistence of social hierarchy and must therefore be addressed separately and in combination if equality is to be achieved.

The liberal frame may be compared to a situation in which the landscape does not match the map. The map being the liberal theoretical frame and the landscape being the multidimensional society that constitutes the American

social life of races, classes, genders, sexualities, and ages, all within a very complex but nevertheless hierarchical structure; in fact, that is what a social hierarchy is, it is complexity. It is not only that there is no map available within liberalism to describe the landscape, the landscape itself is a troubling one with its highs and lows in wealth, access to health care, education, employment and housing, to name a few. It is as if the landscape was full of high mountains and deep valleys, bright sun and dark clouds, while the map only allows for the description of the stillness of the ocean surface, a beautiful summer day, or the total turmoil of water masses clashing in a winter storm. Liberal theory can only describe stillness or turmoil, they are mutually exclusive, order or chaos, freedom and constraint, liberalism cannot describe a structure of inequality that is not seen as permanent but persistent. Anything with highs and lows is seen as total chaos if they would be changeable and not permanent. Liberal theory cannot explain the persistence of social hierarchies and social structures, only their non-existence or their permanence. For liberal theory permanence has to be horizontal stillness, and if it is not horizontal stillness there can only be total chaos of high and lows.

THE SWEDISH WELFARE STATE MEETS AMERICA IN *BROWN V. BOARD*

Race and class constitute *An American Dilemma*, to cite Gunnar Myrdal.⁵ *An American Dilemma* is a social study ordered by the Carnegie Corporation in 1938 on how to address the American Race Problem.⁶ Myrdal, a Swedish lawyer and economist, was asked to develop a strategy to

5. Karl Gunnar Myrdal is a Swedish economist and sociologist who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Economics in 1974. At the invitation of the Carnegie Corporation, Myrdal wrote about the social and economic problems of African Americans in 1938-40 and wrote *AN AMERICAN DILEMMA: THE NEGRO PROBLEM AND MODERN DEMOCRACY* (1944). From 1947 to 1957 Myrdal was executive secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

6. For a description of the important role Alva and Gunnar Myrdal played in the creation of the Swedish welfare state, see Per Wisselgren & Anna Larsson, *The historiography of Swedish sociology and the bounding of disciplinary identity*, 42 *J. OF THE HIST. OF THE BEHAV. SCI.*, 159-176 (2006). Their role has been especially influential through their disciplinary-transcending research between academia and the legislature.

eradicate the American Race Problem. Myrdal wrote: "To the great majority of white Americans the Negro problem has distinctly negative connotations. It suggests something difficult to settle and equally difficult to leave alone."⁷ Myrdal's description of American race relations is, if seen from a liberal position, a description of a paradox.

Myrdal continues: "[E]ven a poor and uneducated white person in some isolated and backward rural region in the Deep South, who is violently prejudiced against the Negro and intent upon depriving him of civic rights and human independence, has also a whole compartment in his valuation sphere housing the entire American Creed of liberty, equality, justice, and fair opportunity for everybody."⁸ In a liberal frame these are paradoxes, things that cannot be settled and yet cannot be left alone. Liberalism is about accepting the paradox and trying to manage it so that it does not explode into chaos.

Myrdal was not a liberal, he operated from the welfare state approach rather than from the liberal understanding of dichotomies, this is why for him American race relations were a dilemma and not a paradox, a dilemma wherein American racism could only be resolved through the abandoning of American classism, and vice versa. Myrdal describes it this way: "The interrelations between the material facts and people's valuations of and beliefs about these facts are precisely what makes the Negro problem a social problem."⁹

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A PARADOX AND A DILEMMA

The Myrdal key is that American race relations are a social dilemma and not a paradox. This means that there are solutions to them because they have a ground in real economics. A dilemma can be resolved while a paradox can only be managed or explode into chaos. This is also why in the end American racism and classism are a political choice and not a theoretical paradox for Myrdal. Myrdal's findings and solutions are presented in the two volumes: *The Negro*

7. MYRDAL, *supra* note 5, at lxxvii.

8. *Id.* at lxxx.

9. *Id.* at lxxxi.

Problem and Modern Democracy.¹⁰ It is the social and psychological data referenced in footnote eleven of *Brown v. Board* that overturns *Plessy v. Ferguson*.¹¹

"Segregation of white and colored children in public schools has a detrimental effect upon the colored children. The impact is greater when it has the sanction of the law, for the policy of separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the negro group. A sense of inferiority affects the motivation of a child to learn. Segregation with the sanction of law, therefore, has a tendency to [retard] the educational and mental development of negro children and to deprive them of some of the benefits they would receive in a racial[ly] integrated school system. Whatever may have been the extent of psychological knowledge at the time of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, this finding is amply supported by modern authority. Any language in *Plessy v. Ferguson* contrary to this finding is rejected."¹²

Gunnar Myrdal's social study is the only study still standing among the works cited in favor of desegregated schools in footnote eleven in *Brown v. Board*.¹³

THE MERITOCRACY

Gunnar Myrdal is the ideological father to the Swedish welfare state and the father-in-law of the former President of Harvard University, Derick Bok. Harvard University is the symbol of the American dream of meritocracy. A meritocracy that within the liberal political imagination

10. *Id.* at lxxx.

11. *Brown v. Bd. of Educ.*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954), *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 (1896).

12. *Brown*, 347 U.S. at 494 (quoting *Brown v. Board of Educ.*, 98 F. Supp. 797, 798 (D. Kan. 1951)).

13. Besides the reference to Myrdal, the most well know study is the "Doll-study" made by K.B. Clark. These are the sources listed in footnote eleven: K.B. CLARK, *EFFECT OF PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION ON PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT*, (1950); HELEN WITMER AND RUTH KOTINSKY, *PERSONALITY IN THE MAKING* c. VI (1952); M. Deutscher and I. Chein, *The Psychological Effects of Enforced Segregation A Survey of Social Science Opinion*, 26 J.PSYCHOL. 259 (1948); I. Chein, *What are the Psychological Effects of Segregation Under Conditions of Equal Facilities?*, 3 INT. J. OPINION AND ATTITUDE RES. 229 (1949); Theodore Brameld, *Educational Costs*, IN *DISCRIMINATION AND NATIONAL WELFARE* 44-48 (R.M. MacIver ed., 1949); E. FRANKLIN FRAZIER, *THE NEGRO IN THE UNITED STATES* 674-81 (1949). See generally MYRDAL, *supra* note 5.

takes the place of both race and class, that flattens the hierarchy of race as well as class. A meritocracy that is the liberal dream of a rule proved through its exceptions, the exceptional disadvantaged person who against all odds succeeds through hard work.

The exceptions: the existence of a few black and a few poor in the sea of white wealth serves as the image of the American dream being available to each and everyone regardless of race and class. The vessel called Affirmative Action is at the disposal of the one who is exceptional to ride the American sea of white wealth. As the American history of privatization shows, any public transportation at the disposal of the disadvantaged is always at the mercy of the will, the free will of white wealth at the core of liberal thought. The free will of American white wealth is the same one that seems always to undercut any form of public transportation. Affirmative Action, already an underfunded way of addressing the American Dilemma of poverty and racism, is under heavy attack. The attack is based on the fact that once a few exceptional people have been able to ride the sea of white wealth, the dichotomy of black/white has been broken because the rule of black poverty is no longer universal. The attack on affirmative action is based on this logic: if black poverty and disadvantage is no longer universal, then white privilege is no longer universal. If white wealth and power is no longer universal, then it is under threat, it is threatened by affirmative action.

For something to not be universal any longer, it only takes one exception. Barbara Grutter was, one white woman not getting what she wanted, to be a student of Michigan University, and imagining a black (or other minority) getting what would otherwise be a universally white privilege, to be a student at Michigan University. Within the liberal frame, because it operates on dichotomies, there is only room for one pair of binaries and each binary is exclusive of every other binary because each binary is universal. The limitation of liberal theory is that it does not take many exceptions to the universality of a binary to challenge the very core of the binary itself. This is why a few rejected white students can come to challenge the whole public transportation system called Affirmative Action. Because Affirmative Action is based on the use of a

dichotomy with the goal of diversity, not equality, even a few rejected white students can challenge the whole system. As Justice O'Connor explained in the *Grutter* case: moving toward a "critical mass" of minority students was indeed a "tailored use" in the promotion of diversity.¹⁴ A welfare state approach would not worry about whether minorities might become the majority in universities because education would be understood as only one variable among many that together create a persistent social hierarchy.

THEORY AND VISION

It is interesting how a theoretical frame often becomes a worldview. I argue that the use of dichotomies is such a frame. I want to contrast the use of dichotomies with what I will call "the persistence of hierarchy." By use of the phrase, "the persistence of hierarchy," I refer to social structures such as social hierarchies and not structuralism as in the class struggle in Marxism. The Marxist class struggle is another form of universal dichotomy, this time between the worker and the capital. Marxism and liberalism both operate around dichotomies. Where liberal theory manages the dichotomy and its tensions Marxism breaks it apart but each theory is dependent on the dichotomy and its universality as foundational for its theoretical frame. I will not elaborate further on Marxism in this essay because it is not Marxist theory that is at the core of the theoretical description of American inequality.

Let me, instead of contrasting liberalism with Marxism, contrast liberalism with the welfare state. Liberal theory uses dichotomies: black/white, poor/rich, worker/capital, female/male, and order/freedom. The welfare state uses the persistence of hierarchy instead of a dichotomy as the theoretical model for descriptions of society. For example, race and class become factors that both contribute to a placement in the social hierarchy. Black is not paired with white and poor is not paired with rich in the welfare state structure. Instead, black, poor, female, and workers are all contributing variables that reflect social hierarchical values.

14. *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 306, 335 (2003).

THE PERSISTENCY OF HIERARCHY

To use dichotomies means that white/black, rich/poor, worker/capital, and order/freedom are presented as different equally-excluding sets of pairs. The problem with using the approach of dichotomies is four-fold.

Tokenism

First, liberalism becomes vulnerable to tokenism. This is when the exception becomes the rule. That Barack can be black and a senator and even president of the United States of America undoes the dichotomy of race in liberal theory. The exception becomes the rule because the dichotomy is not only binary, it is universal. Affirmative Action served that purpose in America, to make the exception, the token, the rule. The rule being that everyone regardless of race or class has access to the privileged higher education, that meritocracy is the rule and not the exception on the road to social safety and privilege. The dichotomy only has two modes, on or off. With the example of meritocracy, a few black and a few poor at our educational facilities makes meritocracy the rule instead of racism and classism. This is also the reason that reverse discrimination can become an argument against Affirmative Action that can be taken seriously. In the welfare state model, Affirmative Action has never been seen as sufficient, that is because it is only tokenism. This is also why reverse discrimination has been the favored method in addressing social inequalities instead of Affirmative Action, where those already qualified based-on-merits get a chance to compete among all those who are qualified based on race and class privileges (white and rich). In the welfare state, reverse discrimination is seen as a necessity if one wants to address social inequalities. Merits in a welfare state are seen as a product of your social status and privileges and as something that gives you access to social status and privilege. This is why merit cannot be the central issue when addressing socially structured inequalities. Because merit is a production of social inequality, to focus on merit as the qualifier as in the *Grutter* case is to keep treating social status as a merit, the

same merit that Affirmative Action was supposed to challenge. Social inequality is not a product of merit, merit is a product of social inequality. Swedish schools systematically practice reverse discrimination at each admission. Let me give the example of gender: if a woman applies to a program where the majority of students are male, then she automatically gets extra points towards her GPA. The awarding of extra points is meant to encourage women to apply to the technical engineering programs. Likewise, if a man applies to a women-dominated program such as nursing school, medical school, or law-school, then he gets additional points towards his GPA.

The welfare state approach is possible because it takes place outside of the liberal frame where the exceptional advantages in form of Affirmative Actions among disadvantaged groups becomes the rule. In the welfare state model the exception does not make the rule because the approach is not universal. The rule is not based on an either/or relation to a dichotomy where, for example, the presence of a few women among a majority of men in prestigious educational institutions would make anyone believe that there was gender equality. Instead, gender equality is seen as achieved only when there is an even distribution among men and women regardless of merits. The liberal theoretical frame is fundamentally vulnerable to the accusation of reverse discrimination because each relationship is an either/or relationship, if the disadvantaged party gets an advantage the traditionally privileged party has experienced a reverse discrimination, and all without making it possible to look at wider structures and expressions of privileges. In Sweden this would have meant that men, before women achieved majorities within our most prestigious programs, law and medicine, could have stopped the general development of women in highly prestigious programs by the effort of even one individual man going to court.

The Isolation of the Binary

Second, the use of dichotomies makes it impossible to show how factors across different dichotomies based on race or class (black/white or poor/rich) are interdependent because within each dichotomy there is no room for additional dichotomies. Each dichotomy is universal in and

of itself. Because each dichotomy, such as black/white, is in and of itself a universal pairs it is theoretically impossible to explain how the dichotomy of poor/rich can have anything to do with the dichotomy of black/white. Within the liberal frame of thinking through dichotomies, it is not possible to show a theoretical interdependence between different pairs of dichotomies because each dichotomy is itself universal.

To Equate or to Implode

Third, because each dichotomy is universal the only way to look at race and class across dichotomies is to conflate them or make them exchangeable with each other. The liberal theoretical frame requires us to say either that black and poor are the same, and if a black person is not poor the person is then not black. This has been how the class argument has been put up against the race argument. Or to equate the dichotomies, that the relationship between black/white may be equated to the relationship between poor/rich. This again makes it impossible to show how race and class are different from each other and yet interdependent. This leads us back to the first issue with using liberal theory in explaining race and class: that it only takes one token exception to undo the liberal race and the liberal class argument. In a social structural view like the welfare state, the pro black argument would not be as vulnerable to the pro class argument and vice versa. The class argument in America is often brought up as an argument against the use of race as a single criteria in Affirmative Action. Instead of an anti-racist argument to show how class also affects merits, or an anti-class argument to show how race affects merits, liberal theory, because of the use of universal binaries, can only use race and class against each other and not for each other as arguments against a blind belief in meritocracy as neutral. Both class and race are important factors in relationship to merit, in fact both race and class are expressed in one's merit. To think that to look at class would be to somehow dilute the race claim or that to look at race would be to somehow dilute the class claim is to be caught in the liberal paradox. This is how dichotomies operate. Within a structural welfare state view, race and class are not

competing factors, they are both factors that deserve reverse discrimination because the goal is equality and within a social structure there is room for both factors, and many more, to be taken into account. Reverse discrimination in all these cases serves to even out the social hierarchy itself.

*The Move from the Place of Politics
to the Space of Theory*

Finally, to apply liberal theory to problems such as race and class is to turn vexing social dilemmas into vexing theoretical paradoxes. When liberal theory is applied to race and class, race and class become vexing theoretical paradoxes, liberal paradoxes, rather than vexing social dilemmas. This is because at any time the relationship between black/white and rich/poor is threatened by its exception, the dichotomy falls apart and a dichotomy that falls apart in liberal theory is the transition from order to chaos. And order has to be maintained for freedom to be possible. That is the foundational liberal paradox. The liberal frame with its dichotomies cannot address the vexing social dilemma of the sea of white wealth because the exception of the black non-poor, and the white non-rich, undoes the liberal dichotomy wherein black-and-poor in each instance must be true and where white-and-rich in each instance must be true for liberal theory to be able to address both race and class, that is, race and class must be interchangeable with each other for them both to fit within the same liberal analysis.

Once a social dilemma is seen through the liberal dichotomy, it has become a paradox and a paradox cannot be solved. Once a dilemma becomes a paradox there is no theoretical way to find a solution: a paradox cannot be solved. While a dilemma is social and has its political resolution, however hard to find it may be, a paradox has no resolution, and where there is no resolution possible, there cannot be a political solution. This also affects the role of the political within the social. If we instead relate to an issue, if we see the problem as a paradox, we can only manage its tensions, we can never resolve its conflict and the conflict is outside of the political. The only way to resolve a paradox is through the fall from the stillness of order into the turmoil of chaos. If we see a problem as a

dilemma we know that there is a resolution and the question is whether there is the political will to resolve the conflict. Political change thus becomes the vehicle for equality instead of the route to chaos.

The paradox allows for theory to prevent the placement of a political responsibility for solving the problem. While a dilemma, unlike a paradox, is what makes the social issue at hand a political issue. A dilemma locates where within a democracy there is not only a political mandate to change but a responsibility to find a resolution through political action. This is why Gunnar Myrdal believed that the American people would elect to resolve their race problem as a political matter within the frame of democracy. Myrdal thought that it would be impossible for the American people to live with the tension that their contradiction of racism and liberal freedom produced. This because Myrdal saw race and class as factors in the constitution of social hierarchies and not as irresolvable paradoxes. Gunnar Myrdal did not see the race and class problem in America through the lens of dichotomies and it was therefore not a paradox but a dilemma. For Myrdal, race and class were variables of a persistent structure. Race and class, viewed as variables of a persistent structure, do not oppose each other, as in a paradox, where the dichotomy of black/white excludes the dichotomy of poor/rich. Instead, in a structural view, black, poor, white and rich are all factors that produce social hierarchies and inequalities, not because black is equivalent with poor, or because white is equivalent with rich, or because the dichotomy of black/white and the dichotomy of poor/rich are equivalent.

THE POLITICS OF SOLIDARITY

In a welfare state model black and poor ends up on the same side, not theoretically but politically because they are factors or variables that guide low placements in the social hierarchy. At the same time, white and rich guide high placements in the social hierarchy. This is what makes race and class an American Dilemma for Myrdal instead of an American Paradox. This is also why Myrdal naively thought that the American people would summon the political will to resolve their dilemma. From Myrdal's

perspective, there are more people who are black and or poor than there are people who are white and rich: black-but-not-poor + black-and-poor + poor-but-not-black = majority population. For Myrdal, this meant that there was a majority of Americans that would be in political favor of changing both the race and class inequalities in America.

This is why for Myrdal the race problem could only be resolved by also resolving the class problem and vice versa, a resolution only possible if race and class in America is a political dilemma and not a theoretical paradox. The dilemma, in other words, can only theoretically be resolved by looking at race and class as distinct from each other and at the same time as interdependent with each other. The welfare state model looks at social hierarchy as a persistent structure, instead of only allowing for only the two variables of the dichotomy. The welfare state looks at the structure as being composed of a large variety of variables that together constitute the social hierarchy in a society. The point with variables is that they are each distinct from each other and, at the same time, they are interdependent because they together constitute a social hierarchy or structure.

The interesting thing about operating based on dichotomies is that the stronger party in the dichotomy is always the overall winner, even when the weaker party is the direct target of benefits, this is because when one focuses only on the dichotomy nothing is done to affect the general social structure that benefits just a very small part of the population. The focus on dichotomies disempowers and takes resource reallocation away from the majority of the disempowered population. To only focus on reallocation of resources through the lens of dichotomies will do nothing to actually affect the disadvantaged party in the specific dichotomy because the social hierarchy remains intact.

The group at the top of the social hierarchy will remain on top and even get supported in its position by addressing the problems of social hierarchy through dichotomies because, even when in the narrow view of the dichotomy it looks like a reallocation of resources from the superior to the inferior, the transaction still only solidifies the position of the stronger party in the dichotomy, as can be seen from a structural viewpoint. The more narrow the reallocation of

resources is, the less is the general social structure likely to change.

This is why it would benefit almost everyone in the hierarchy to look at social inequality as a persistent structure rather than as a dichotomy: If we only look at changing a specific relationship within the dichotomy, it will only change the situation remotely for the party on the losing end of that dichotomy. And, as I said before, one dichotomy excludes the existence of other dichotomies. The base of parties invested in a change becomes only as narrow as the losing party of the specific dichotomy. However, if one looks at inequality from the perspective of the welfare state, it is everyone's interest, jointly together against the interest of a very narrow group on the top of the hierarchy, to work for social change and reallocation of resources. To take a structural welfare state approach is to not have a problem with the relationship between race and class as exclusive of each other because a structural view does not need race and class to be conflated or exchangeable. The dichotomy is the way that race and class become difficult to theoretically explain despite the fact that our regular social observations show us that race and class both matter and that they matter differently but equally much and, most of all, that they are interdependent of each other, but not symmetrically so.

SOCIAL CONTRACT THEORY AND THE MELTING-POT

The Liberal Paradox has its origin in the social contract where freedom and order are set up as the paradox. The paradox has moved from being a theoretical explanation of a specific social event into being a World View. A World View not only shapes the way we see the World, it also shapes the World that we see. The explanations not only describe, they also prescribe. This is why we can think in black/white or rich/poor furthermore. We do not only think or see black and white or rich and poor, we also act upon these assumptions.

The application of liberal theory to the metaphor of the melting pot gives no room within the liberal theory itself for the images of a diverse society. Instead of negotiating the multiple tensions that exist between several variables, the melting-pot literally melts the tensions and the plurality

into one solid mass, so that the liberal paradox can again function as an explanation of a binary tension. Thus the melting-pot is only able to describe the plurality within a horizontal social view of formal equality, while completely missing the point of substantive inequality. To apply liberal theory to the metaphor of the melting-pot has two major effects. First, liberal theory undoes the possibility of describing diversity, all diversity has to be melted together in to a single rainbow. Second, the use of the melting-pot undoes the possibility of describing substantive inequality.

CONCLUSION

Why is race and class still seen as a paradox in American thought? For Gunnar Myrdal, race and class was not a liberal paradox, for him race and class constituted a dilemma that, unlike a paradox, could by the will of the American people, be resolved. A paradox is forever irresolvable, while a dilemma is something that has a resolution, even if at moments it is hard to find. For Gunnar Myrdal, the only way he imagined this American dilemma could be resolved would be for the American people to come to the conclusion that for them to be rid of their race problem they also had to get rid of their class problem. With amazing naiveté, this *National Economist*, simply concluded that there was only one choice that the American people could make and that choice had to be to get rid of class and race, one through the other. Myrdal's conclusion is now more the 50 years old, and the American Dilemma is still unresolved, and I argue that it is a dilemma caught up in the liberal paradox.

One of the most fascinating things about the role of liberalism in American thought is how completely ill-matched it is as a theoretical tool for describing the American social landscape. Liberalism, as the theoretical model for or description of life between people in America, is on its own liberal terms a badly-chosen theoretical frame. It makes any description of the multiple tension points between people impossible to describe. The liberal compromise is what, within liberalism, is described as the social utopia of a melting-pot, and the melting pot is a

metaphor that cannot be explained within liberal theory, except through its implosion of difference into one rainbow.

Instead of changing the theoretical frame, liberalism tries to reconcile that which is impossible to reconcile: That it can be seen as justice that a few people have so much and that very many more people have so very little although all live in a land of abundance and that divide between the have and have-nots is so closely linked to race. The result is that neither race nor class can be explained within the liberal paradigm of the liberal paradox. This is so regardless of whether we see race as diversity or class as diversity or race as substantive inequality or class as substantive inequality. The reason for this theoretical problem is twofold. First, liberal theory operates through dichotomies that make diversity impossible to describe. Second, the melting pot metaphor is the social contract in return. The melting pot is the liberal paradox of the individual freedom's dependence on the threat posed by the collective order.